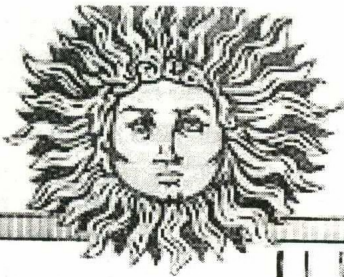


OCTOBER, 1996

THE

Hermes

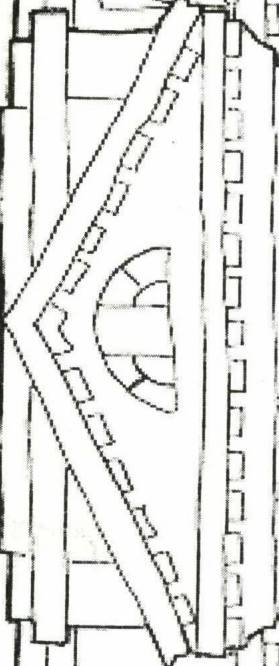
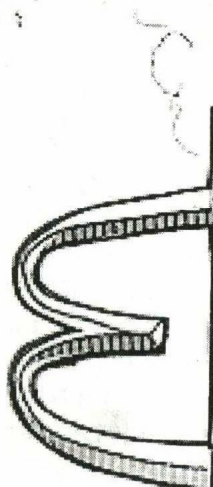


PEPSI

NORTH COLLEGE

Gillette

WATSON



Voting alone will do nothing. Voting and taking constructive action often won't do much more. Often times, people are given inadequate information from the media, or have just not taken interest in politics at all, and then simply have no bases for making decisions at the polls. Most are too cynical to vote, for the option they actually want is to chose a third party candidate, or to chose none of the above, which few are even allowed to do. The result? Forty percent of those able to vote in 1992 didn't, and twenty percent of those who did vote chose Ross Perot. In 1994, the year that Republicans claimed majorities in both the House and the Senate for the first time in decades, sixty percent of those allowed to vote chose not to-- yet the newly powerful Republican Congress claimed a mandate from the people to assault environmental protection laws, consumer protection laws, welfare, the constitutional rights of homosexuals, increase defense spending beyond the Defense

Department's requests, decrease student financial aid, and much, much more.

It would seem that politicians do not cater to those who do not vote, while they will play favor to people like Perot by virtue of his money and particularly his popularity.

Voting takes almost no time, and it is an extraordinary way to say "none of the above" or "thrid parties matter" or "not the other person" or even "I like this candidate" and maybe get heard. It will not make the system work for you, make you free, or make the world just.

But the old statement is true-- that the easiest way to revolution in this country is not for people to take up arms, or even hold protests, but for the unheard sixty percent to speak firmly.

-- Trevor Griffey

About Hermes

Hermes was founded in 1975 by a group of student activists seeking to provide an alternative to Wesleyan's school newspaper, the *Argus*. *Hermes* is named after the god who, according to Greek mythology, slew the hundred-eyed monster *Argus*.

Around seven issues of *Hermes* are produced a year. We publish a wide range of material, including articles on campus life, activism and social commentary from a critical viewpoint. *Hermes* serves as a forum for progressive and radical activists on campus to express their ideas; this is done with the hope of increasing activism and social awareness at Wesleyan. Despite being definitely on the left, we aren't mindlessly so and we encourage criticism and controversy. We also aren't beyond a little investigative reporting on the dirty deeds of the administration, a form of activism in its own right.

The staff of *Hermes* meets once a week in the WSA building (190 High St.). We are organized in a collective, nonhierarchal, informal manner. There are no permanent positions and nobody is in charge; decisions are made by the entire staff. New people are encouraged to show up and get involved at any time. In addition to writers, we need people willing to do proof-reading, editing, photography and lay-out; if you are familiar with Macintosh and Quark Xpress, we will immediately bestow you with gifts. And if you don't like what you find written here — join us and write your own articles.

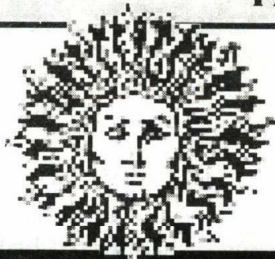
HERMES

FAMOUS ALUMAE NOT FROM WES

Emily Dickinson	Josh Hecht
Bjork	Livia Gershon
Sam Gedjenson	Adam Zeller
Steve Jobs	Erik Vickstrom
Genghis Kahn	Trevor Griffey
Tom	Julie Delude
Jerry	Jenny Saranow
Neil Diamond	Sobi Hossain
Walt Disney	Jack Tejapaitul
Joe McCarthy	Becky Karish
Michel Foucault	Laura Clawson
Divine	Garrick Wahlstrand
Herb Caen	Daniel Young
Richard Simmons	Jen MacKenzie
Sylvia Plath	Megan Wolff
Death	Brien E. T.
Che Guavera	Sarah Wilkes
Al Roker	David Vine
Maureen Heacock	Aongus Burke
Marlboro Man	Jay Feinberg
Jesus	Owen Pollock

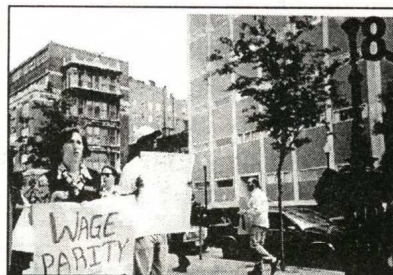
All opinions expressed are those of the authors, and donotnecessarily represent the views of the Hermes staff.

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REGISTER
TO VOTE
NOW

1. Percent of Americans in bottom 1/5 of income distribution who receive housing subsidies (public housing or rental assistance): 19
2. Percent of Americans in top 1/5 of income distribution who receive housing subsidies (tax breaks): 87
3. Ratio of US military spending to combined total of military spending by the Pentagon's top six "enemies" in 1995: 17:1
4. Amount in dollars that Clinton added to the military budget for fiscal year 1996: 25 billion
5. Amount, in dollars that Congress then added to the combined total: 7 billion
6. Number of people killed in Disneyland ride mishaps since 1964: 8
7. Number of cellular phones thrown onstage by audience members at a Seattle Sex Pistols show: 1
8. Number of seconds it took for Pearl Jam's Toledo show to sell out this year: 60
9. World record for playing Uno nonstop, in hours: 144
10. World record for playing Uno nonstop, underwater: 85
11. Average amount parents plan to spend per child on back-to-school items, per year: \$363
12. Percent of baby boomers who think facial wrinkles on a man indicate experience and maturity : 56
13. Percent of baby boomers who think facial wrinkles on a woman indicate the same thing: 44
14. Average days of school year for black students in Mississippi in 1940: 124
15. Average length for white students: 160
16. Percent of the US population that is African-American: 12
17. Percent of prisoners on death row who are African-American: 40

Sources: 1-2: CT Housing Coalition Newsletter. 3-5: War Resister's League, Feb '96. 6-7: The Stranger, 8: The Hartford Advocate,



HIGH COMMON GROUND

THE ACADEMIC FORUM BORES ALL

Trevor Griffey

I have sometimes felt like I was not learning as much from my professors as I could. While I take their classes, I don't interact with many on a personal basis, and hence rarely learn from their character as I have with many of my student friends. This, I had thought, was a loss, for professors and students could really benefit from an exchange which would bridge the differences between the two groups. But after going to Wesleyan's first Academic Forum of the year on September 15th, I'm not quite so sure that there's much difference to bridge.

The forum was well attended, with Shanklin 107 predominantly filled by professors. This made me feel at first privy to something of great import to the goings on in the university. As the co-moderators, professor Szegedy-Maszak and president Bennet, announced the topic of the forum, I was even more glad to have attended. Discussion would be centered, we were told, on "the human mind and its infinite betterment."

Professor Szegedy-Maszak began the forum by alluding to the four papers written by professors Horst, Fisher, Slotkin, and Rosenbaum to aid discussion. In addition, he added the following questions as possible topics to discuss: what is the

university's relationship to larger communities and cultures and how can this inform the curriculum? How should the presence of a diverse student body inform the curriculum? Is there a

conflict between teaching and research? And what are the influence and responsibilities of an institution

for higher education.

Following this introduction, I was excited to see what direction the forum would take. Finally, I thought. Some of the best minds on campus had come together to discuss the nature of truth,

beauty, and justice; the mission of the university and difficulties in following through on it; the place of different disciplines within these goals; the ideal relationship between teacher and student; the place of the university within the world; and, of course, why these people were professors in the first place. Not all of these topics could be covered well in the hour and a half that we had, but so much the better. There would at least be lots to talk about.

But what followed was a great disappointment on all levels.

The first forty minutes of the forum was spent not in dialogue, but in different professors trying to frame the topic of discussion.

During this time, no one expressed explicit opinions or concerns but rather said that certain issues could be addressed in a multitude of ways and we had to beware of focusing on any narrow mode of discussion.

The main topic of this framing, as well as what followed for the half hour after framing the discussion,

was the relationship between teachers and their research. Most said that teaching and research are being split up in academia, that this is a bad

trend, and that for Wesleyan to have scholars teach and even offer courses on their expertise, it needs to

I had thought that professors and students could really benefit from an exchange which would bridge the differences between the two groups. But after going to Wesleyan's first Academic Forum of the year on September 15th, I'm not quite sure there's much difference to bridge.





make sure that it keeps offering regular sabbaticals and requires professors to teach no more than two courses per semester. A few felt this statement gave too much importance to research, and some felt the opposite. Over an hour was spent on variations of this opinion.

For the half hour that was left, various concerns were raised about whether the curriculum is interdisciplinary enough, and about whether modern culture has dumb-ed down the students or just made their experiences more diverse.

But for the most part, the forum was absurdly boring. Teachers left out the back door early just as students did in my descriptive astronomy last semester. There didn't seem to be as much dialogue as disconnected opinions—with few responding to others in more than meek ways. It was hot, and stuffy, and few seemed to say much more than “I think we should consider...” No topic seemed of great relevance, and the gist of those which occupied our time was: we're doing well, we just need to continue to be nice to teachers because cutting edge research is what makes this school.

But how narrow minded a view this is! The ability for students to learn about ground breaking research is important, as is the importance of having teachers who do it, but only if students have the adequate foundation with which understand this research. And the nature of such a foundation was completely ignored by the forum. Only if we think that students need no particular skill or knowledge to graduate from Wesleyan can we assume that the mind is bettered when addressed by any combination of prestigious scholars.

Only then can we ignore the following topics as

professors will not make departments more fragmented as teachers claim to have interdisciplinary material. Obviously confident of their own freedoms, professors at the forum attributed potential academic problems in the university to the administration, to student ignorance, and to contemporary American culture. They did not address any current problems with the school, nor whether the “increased prolifera-

Only if we assume that students need no particular skill or knowledge to graduate from Wesleyan can we assume that the mind is being bettered if it is being addressed by prestigious scholars in whatever manner they chose.



tion of knowledge” by professors themselves could itself come to undermine the intentions of a liberal arts college.

For if the university has no greater mission than to have faculty do their own thing however they see fit, then there aren't any serious problems at this school right now. We must be doing well academically, the tone of the forum went. Professors may need freedom, and Wesleyan may do a good job at providing this. But to make professors' freedom the sole basis for our deciding whether students are getting the education they deserve for nearly \$30,000 a year seems both ludicrous and self-centered.

Near the end, professor Rouse asked to what end the forums would go. He thought that knowing this would allow people to communicate and focus better. President's Bennet answer was to say that the discussion that had occurred was just the kind of thing he was looking for—open discussion.

I left the Academic Forum with an new sense of connection to the faculty. With the forum's dialogue

If the university has no greater mission than to have faculty do their own thing however they see fit, then there aren't any serious problems at this school right now.

the participants at the academic forum did: the importance of experiential learning; the effectiveness (or lack thereof) of general expectations; the continuing loss of our best professors in cultural studies as well as profs of color; class overcrowding and budget cuts; or even what a liberal arts education is. Only then can we assume that increasing specialization by

restrained as teachers seemed to fear making biased claims about the worth of other professors' life choices; most people stating their own opinions regardless of their relevance to the discussion; the major topic of discussion focused on an issue of more importance to the group itself than to most others outside the group; an intensely slow pace, detached feel and leadership which did little guiding, I felt as if I had just left a student committee meeting. Maybe we're not so distant as I had thought.





by Josh Hecht and Adam Zeller

Souping up Convocation

Two Students' Recommendations

On September 8, 1996, the Wesleyan community gathered for its first convocation after a twenty year hiatus. As the processional passed, one question stuck in our minds, "Where is everybody?" Despite the low attendance, the pomp and pageantry continued placing us in the Wesleyan of 1916. Professors walked by a sea of empty white seats, their heads held high, but with obvious amusement on their faces. When all motions had ended, convocation began.

Rabbi Elyse Kramer gave an opening prayer which set a meditative tone. We quickly slipped deeper into meditation while listening to the thoughts of the Chair of the Board, Raymond K. Denworth '54.

Next on the agenda was the awarding of the degrees of Master of Arts on seven professors from various departments. As we watched them walk up to receive their degrees, an upperclassman whispered to us, "Watch this. It's something important." We took his word for it and clapped violently. I turned to the person on my other side, meaning to pass the message along, but no one was there. Next, the prestigious Raymond E. Baldwin Medal was conferred to a prestigious professor, Stanley Lebergott. He was so overwhelmed with the prestige, we all felt a little prestigious.

This was followed by a musical interlude written and performed by Anthony Braxton, not to be confused with R&B diva Toni Braxton. This was the highlight of the convocation. There was jazz in the air.

On to Babs. (Barbara-Jan Wilson to the rest of you). Although she did let us come to this school, and we are forever grateful, the combined SAT scores of the Freshman class loses its charm after the third time. However, the nearly seventy Freshman felt very welcomed. Another welcome was given by Dean of the College Allen J. Green (not to be confused with soul/gospel vocalist Al Green).

The Queen of Middletown took an hour out of her busy schedule of running our booming metropolis to add to the welcome. Mayor Holzberg clued us in on the many cultural and recreational aspects that Middletown has to offer. After listening to her oratory, I whispered to the person next to me, "Gee, I'm glad I didn't go to school in Boston."

Gabriel Paquette '99 and Laurie Deiner '97 gave us each their own student salutations. Then Ann Wightman, the Chair of Faculty, gave her greeting. We were awe struck.

President Doug Bennett '59 gave his address next. He introduced us to his new wife Midge Bennet, the Hilary Clinton of Wesleyan. She considers us "her class." Bennet continued his remarks by telling us how the class of 2000 bridges the millennium for Wesleyan. He then led us in a rousing rendition of the Alma Mater, with several a capella groups helping us along. By this time a cold rain was coming down.

Finally, Rabbi Kramer gave her benediction. The faculty recessed and we all moved to the really important stuff, the food.

It was an odd sight. They prepared for a plethora of people by setting out dozens of eight-foot subs. Then, students and faculty joined forces to remove the leftover subs to their various dorms and homes. The convocation came to a graceful conclusion with the stirring sounds of a steel-drum band in the background.

Although this convocation could be considered successful by some, others would beg to differ. A sense of student apathy was omnipresent, which is odd for Wesleyan. Maybe we are such a progressive school that we have progressed beyond such antiquated traditions. If this is the case, what might make a better alternative for Wesleyan's recently revived convocation?

We have a few suggestions:

- An opening prayer by Jesse Jackson. The whole crowd would get the sense of a revival rather than a convocation.
- We give out prestigious degrees by a system of raffle. When one enters Convocation, he or she is given a ticket. Later, Bennett calls out the winners to come up and receive their newly earned Master's degrees.
- Following a musical interlude by Anthony Braxton, the R&B diva Toni Braxton and her crew of dancers sing a rendition of "You're Makin' Me High."
- Putting a new twist on the SAT statistic, Barbara-Jan Wilson reads out the SAT and SAT II scores of five randomly selected people from the audience.
- Replacing Allen J. Green's presentation of the class, soul singer Al Green sings "Let's Stay Together."
- To replace Mayor Holzberg's speech, she is pitted against Barbara-Jan and Raymond K. Denworth '54 in a fast and furious game of Wesleyan jeopardy. Why not?
- As for the rest of the welcoming speeches, we could just have a welcoming party, Eclectic. (Sorry, even faculty have to pay \$2 to get at the keg.)
- Finally, commission Ani Difranco to rewrite the school Alma Mater in her own punk-folk manner.

These are just a few suggestions for the administration to consider for next year. If these suggestions are put into action, we guarantee that the sea of white chairs will become a sea of faces.



Beyond Union Summer

Continuing Student Labor Activism

Laura Clawson

This summer, I spent three weeks in an East Boston convent—one with the nuns gone, cross-shaped patches of unfaded paint on the walls of every room, three slow-draining showers (a problem, as they were supposed to serve between eighteen and thirty people), and a thick layer of grime on everything. After we'd been there for awhile making messes, there were reports of enormous cockroaches. There were 18 of us who stayed in Boston for the whole twenty-one days, days that almost all began by 8:00 a.m. and didn't end until after 7:00 p.m. Being the spoiled middle-class girl that I am, I'm still a little surprised that I enjoyed it.

So I was a Union Summer intern, Union Summer being the AFL-CIO's "effort to re-introduce young Americans to the labor movement and, in turn, to inject the movement with a dose of youthful enthusiasm,"

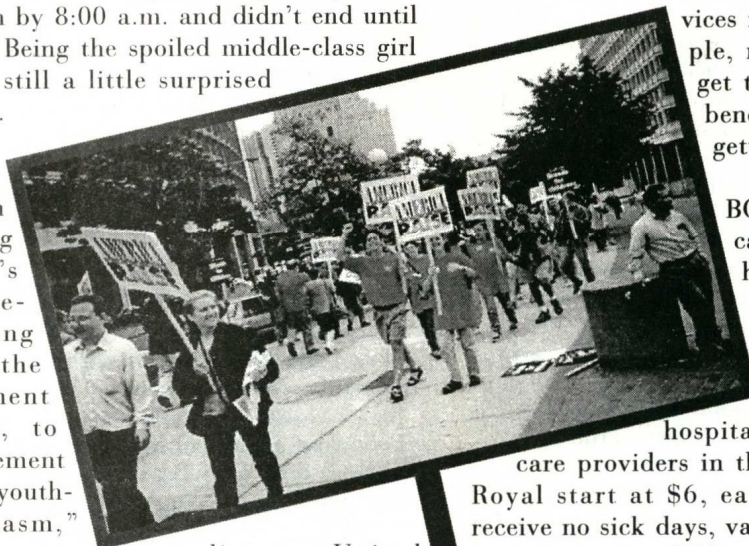
according to United Auto Workers magazine *Solidarity*. During the many hours we spent outside of the convent each day, we handed out thousands upon thousands of leaflets; travelled miles and miles in the subways; walked around Boston wearing signs and feeling like idiots; and yelled until we were hoarse. We made hundreds of telephone calls, helped supervise informal union voting on a work-to-rule resolution, were kicked out of two hospitals before we were prevented by a court injunction from going into any more, registered hundreds of people to vote, and walked on three picket lines and in three parades.

There was a point to all of this; none of us were doing it only for the weekly stipend we received, nor even for the chance to tell all our friends we'd been in a convent. The question is, what was the point? I suspect that different people would give very different answers. The union campaigns we worked on were important, of course. Much of our time was spent working with the Service Employees

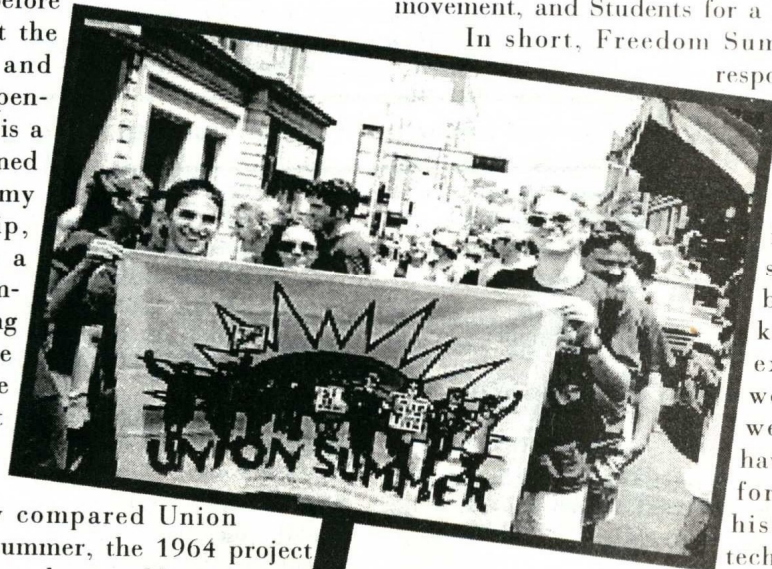
International Union Local 285, which was negotiating to get the employees of the former Boston City Hospital a fair contract. BCH was in the process of merging with the Boston University Medical Center Hospital, and, though the unions to which BCH employees belonged had official recognition, the new management was neither willing to offer a fair contract nor to accept binding arbitration. In other words, just as the hospital became a for-profit institution, cutting back the services it offered to uninsured people, management was trying to get the workers to accept fewer benefits than they were already getting.

What was happening at BCH seemed almost insignificant in contrast to what was happening at Royal Institutional Services, though. Royal is an institutional laundry that has contracts with thirty-six hospitals and other major health care providers in the Boston area. Workers at Royal start at \$6, earn an average of \$6, and receive no sick days, vacations, or pensions. Health insurance is available only at a cost of over \$50 a week, nearly impossible when a forty-hour work week earns \$260 a week, before taxes. As the company gets new hospital contracts, the workload increases dramatically (workers launder thousands of sheets per hour), but wages and benefits do not increase. The company simply takes that money as profit.

In addition to this gross economic injustice, Royal also provides its workers with such incredibly hard, unsafe working conditions that it has been cited for numerous safety violations (during one inspection tour, an inspector was burned on an exposed steam pipe). The plant was heated for the first time last winter, while temperatures often reach 120 degrees in the summer. Supervisors tell workers not to be concerned about HIV when, while sorting dirty laundry that has just arrived from hospitals, they are occasionally injured by used needles and syringes.



A lot of articles about Union Summer push the idea that we were actually relevant to ongoing labor disputes, such as the BCH and Royal campaigns. That would be nice, but if it is the only standard by which Union Summer's success is to be measured, there is no way that the program could have been the best use of the money spent on it. The story about Union Summer that I want to see told is a product of my hopes before I arrived in Boston at the beginning of June and what I have seen happening since more than it is a product of what happened on any given day of my three-week internship, more even than it is a product of how the campaigns we were working on were and will be resolved, though I came to care deeply about them.



The AFL-CIO and the media frequently compared Union Summer to Freedom Summer, the 1964 project that sent 1,000 college students to Mississippi to register black people to vote, a comparison that was in many ways absurd. There is a big difference between spending three weeks getting kicked out of businesses and maybe even arrested, but returning every day to a safe (if dirty) place, and spending an entire summer endangering your life in rural Mississippi. I'm guessing that Boston has better restaurants than pretty much anywhere in Mississippi did in 1964, for one thing. Additionally, certain gender issues have been worked out since Freedom Summer, and our lives were not in danger.

Despite the differences in living situations, the comparison held up in one regard, and I devoutly hope in two. First, Freedom Summer was significant largely because—however unfair it was—having northern white college students working and dying for the Civil Rights movement gained a great deal of publicity, more than the efforts of southern black people ever would have gotten. Union Summer also had a major public relations component. We were walking symbols—symbols that the labor movement is not dead, but young and fresh; that young people care about politics and social justice; that the labor movement has changed in the past decades and is no longer corrupt and filled with self-interested bullies. This focus on youth did get quite a bit of publicity, mostly good, and for that I'm glad.

One of the most important things about Freedom Summer, though, was not visible on any given day of that summer or even at the end of the summer, so we can't yet know if Union Summer will yield equivalent benefits. The people who did Freedom Summer remained activists. They went on to start or be important in the Berkeley Free Speech Movement, the women's movement, the anti-war movement, and Students for a Democratic Society.

In short, Freedom Summer alumni were responsible for much of

the activism for which the 1960s are remembered. Union Summer interns are back at school or work now, bringing with us knowledge about the existence of the working poor that welfare opponents have tried so hard to forget, about labor history and activist techniques. The question is, what and how will we remember?

If many of the 1,000 Union Summer interns go back to our lives and tell our friends what we saw and learned and did, and commit ourselves to seeing and learning and doing more, it could revitalize not just the labor movement, but the entire American left. If, on the other hand, we forget or do little about what we remember, then Union Summer will have gained nothing more than help on a few specific campaigns and some good press. That wouldn't be a total waste, but it would be a major disappointment.

Student Labor Action Coalitions are being formed at campuses across the country, and Wesleyan is no exception. Union Summer alums and other interested students have formed the United Students and Labor Action Coalition, which has already collected hundreds of signatures on a petition calling for the University or ARAMARK to improve conditions for workers in the Campus Center, which has a completely inadequate ventilation system for the amount of food being produced. Several of us have also been to a rally in Hartford to support the workers of the Sheraton, who may soon be forced to strike to save their union and the benefits it has gained them.

Even if you didn't do Union Summer, you can be an activist now. Joining USLAC is one good idea among many. Unless you want to see this country continue to drift right, your participation in an active left, above and beyond voting, is necessary.



Political Awareness And Activism on Campus

Information collected by Sarah Wilkes and Catherine Herdlick

As a Freshman, I came to Wesleyan infused with the stereotype that this place is (or was, depending on who I asked) a hotbed of political activism. But how so, I wondered. Just how "active" are we? Are our political hearts in Middletown or in our home states? How do we find out what we're supposed to be concerned about? And finally, what exactly are we concerned about? Curious to find out the truth, or at least some notion of it, I conducted this poll

Out of 150 polled Wesleyan students:

86.6% are registered voters (as of 9/21/96).

Of those, **36%** are registered here in Connecticut (includes those students who already reside in CT), **63%** are registered in their home states.

Only **30.66%** feel well-informed of the policies of their representatives, but **57.33%** feel well-informed of the policies of the presidential candidates.

When asked if they considered themselves "politically active," **33.3%** said "yes," **62.6%** said no, and **4%** said "maybe."

27.33% have participated in a political or social protest in the past year (again, as of 9/21/96), **72.66%** have not.

40.6% do not associate themselves with any particular political parties. Of those that do:

50% are Democrats

4% are Republicans

2% are Green Party members/supporters

2% are Libertarians

0.66% are Socialist

0.66% are Communist

36% have, in the past year, written letters to politicians who represent them; **64%** have not.

33.3% do not check on the news regularly. Of those who do (includes those who check occasionally),

61.8% prefer newspapers as their main source of information

18.6% prefer TV news

7.6% prefer radio

6.7% prefer newsmagazines

4.2% prefer Internet news services

0.85% prefer newsletters

This information represents about 5% of the Wesleyan student population and is not necessarily a definitive measure of the political energy of the whole student body. But from this randomly-selected sample, one can see a few notable trends. You can see that a majority of the students, 86.6%, are registered voters, and of those, 63% are registered outside Connecticut, suggesting that their political concerns lie elsewhere. Despite this, only 30.6% know enough about the people who represent them. Interestingly, quite a few students have participated in protests and/or have written letters to politicians, and a majority identify with a certain political party, yet a majority of those polled did not consider themselves "politically active." Perhaps merely a redefinition of the term is in order, rather than a complete reexamination of the student body's behavior.

Not concerned with any social or political issues: **8.6%**

Welfare reform: **24.66%**

Education: **18.66%**

Abortion rights: **16.66%**

Environment: **16%**

Health care: **11.33%**

Gender issues: **8%**

Affirmative Action/other racial issues: **8%**

Queer rights/issues: **7.33%**

U.S. economic policy/deficit: **6%**

Poverty: **6%**

International relations/issues: **4.66%**

Campus Issues (including financial aid): **4.6%**

Human/Individual Rights: **3.33%**

Social security/ social services: **3.33%**

U.S. Military Action/ Spending: **2.66%**

AIDS: **1.33%**

Other (including crime, overpopulation, marijuana legalization, and immigration): **8.6%**

Heart of Darkness

The Investments that really fund Wesleyan

by Livia Gershon

Imagine an institution that financially supports:

- doing business with an internationally-condemned military government guilty of killing thousands of peaceful demonstrators and arresting, imprisoning, raping, and torturing even more;
- locking workers out of their work places and encouraging police attacks on them;
- producing a product that killed 400,000 people in the US alone in 1995;
- committing acts of extreme cruelty toward animals;
- discriminating against inner-city workers
- destroying local economies

One institution that indirectly supports all these activities is Wesleyan University. By investing where it does, the university makes it easier for major corporations to commit acts that most members of the student body, faculty and administration would probably find reprehensible. Wesleyan's portfolio, through which the university's endowment of over three hundred million dollars is invested, contains stock in some of the slimmest corporations in the world.

One of the most disturbing investments is in PepsiCo, a company that continues to do business in Burma (officially renamed Myanmar by a military gov-

ernment which seized power illegally) despite an international call for a boycott of the country. PepsiCo is part of the joint venture Pepsi Products Myanmar, whose profits almost certainly benefit the nation's government, helping it to continue its attacks on pro-democracy leaders and their supporters. Pepsi also buys sweeteners from A. E. Staley, a company whose labor policies, including using lock-outs and police attacks against unionizing workers, have outraged unions and their supporters across the country.

In addition, the university is invested in two tobacco giants, Philip Morris and R.J. Reynolds (through Nabisco), and in Gillette, widely known for its unnecessary tests on animals. The endowment also contains stock in McDonalds, which is widely boycotted for paying workers at its central city locations considerably less than those in the suburbs, and in Wal-Mart, known for using its huge financial resources to sell products at a loss until all small local competitors in a given location go out of business.

Wesleyan's investments are based on decisions made by the portfolio subcommittee, which consists of members of the Board of Trustees and outside advisors. The subcommittee meets quarterly in closed

meetings where they make all decisions concerning the management of the portfolio.

But even if the subcommittee wanted to take a stand on social issues (say by divesting from Burma, as many universities across the country have already done), according to University Treasurer Bob Taylor, university policy would prevent them from doing so.

The policy he cites goes back to 1970, when, partially in response to calls for divestment from South Africa, the Board of Trustees appointed a committee to investigate the question of socially responsible investing. The committee's report recommended that the university not consider social or political activities in making its investment decisions. The report reads: "The task of the portfolio manager must



CAMPUS ISSUES



be insulated from that of evaluating investment holdings on the basis of moral or political criteria. The mandate to the portfolio managers is clear. It is to secure the strongest financial position for the University."

The university apparently accepted the committee's recommendations, although Wesleyan's eventual divestment from South Africa suggests that they were not always strictly followed. Today, Treasurer Taylor and the portfolio subcommittee accept the policy as an absolute and entirely avoid social questions in their considerations of investments.

It's an understandable position. According to Dwain Pup, a financial planner specializing in socially responsible investments, investments with a conscience earn slightly less than average. The difference is under 1 percent, but that's significant when you consider the amount of money Wesleyan is investing. Pup argues that the main reason for this differential is that there are so few responsible options among mutual funds and other investments that investing in them leaves little room for choice or diversification. The lack of investments that can do well while doing good is self-perpetuating: until more people and institutions dedi-

cate themselves to responsible investing, funds that take social and political issues into account will remain unappealing, and until they become appealing, few people and institutions will invest in them.

Yet even if truly socially responsible investing is unlikely for Wesleyan in the short term, there is still no reason for the university to ignore glaring corporate crimes in designing its portfolio. Dropping corpora-

tions that participate in obviously hideous activities, like PepsiCo, would send a crucial message to corporate America without per-

By investing where it does, the university makes it easier for major corporations to commit acts that most members of the student body, faculty and administration would probably find reprehensible.

ceptibly affecting the university's bottom line.

But the portfolio committee shows no sign of taking even that modest action. Instead, they will almost certainly cling to the 1970 policy as proof that they are forbidden from developing consciences. The only way to change their minds is probably for the Wesleyan community to demand an end to the policy-and then demand a new policy that requires the university to consider social issues in its investments. Until that happens, everyone at this school bears some responsibility for corporate atrocities around the world by virtue of their passive acceptance.



POLICE UNACCOUNTABILITY

Jennifer McKenzie

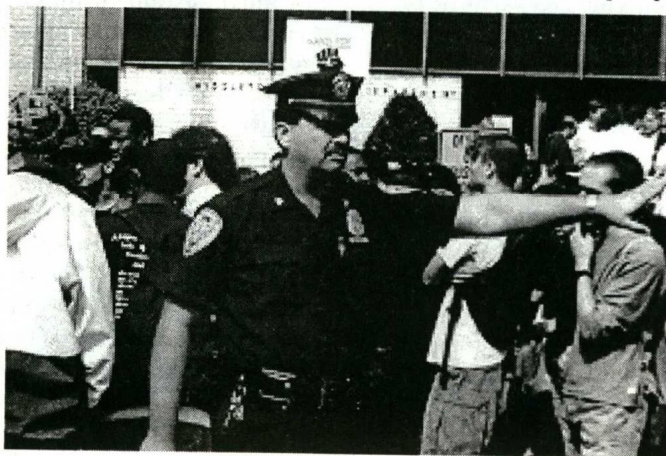


"History cannot be seen, just as one cannot see grass growing... but the fanatical spirit that inspired the upheavals is worshipped for decades thereafter, for centuries." Boris Pasternak

I wrote this to try to figure out why, as plans were laid for the march on the 24th, my primary feeling was unease verging on dread. Any why, after a large student turnout, I still felt that in some essential part, the demonstration had been a failure.

I would like to emphasize as much as possible that the number of march participants and their preparedness was certainly not due to me or others who, like me, dropped out of the

organizing process because they felt uncomfortable with or disheartened by it. I am fully aware that my criticizing an end result without having done everything in my power to change it makes me a hypocrite. But I've also had enough conversations with students and residents of Middletown to know that my own



inability to connect fully to the current mode of activism is shared by others. I admire the commitment of those core individuals who stuck with it the whole way, who spent hours making signs and video cameras and statements. Coordinating technical details and logistics demands an immense amount of time and energy; and it is on the basis of these mundane, practical considerations that an event often flies or falls.

However, it is precisely the need for a legalistic mentality, so necessary on one level, that can lead to both a blind scrabbling at semantic detail, and a cynical overattention to empty formalism. I see two flaws in the anatomy of recent student protests; these flaws surface as obvious contradictions in statements. For example, panicking about walking on the grass, being hesitant to use the words "racist" or "brutality" because they sound "too antagonistic", while at the same time demanding "a revamping of the entire police department" which "the community" will hold "accountable for its actions and beliefs", "to work on eliminating biases inherent in the department". Not to get bogged down in twisting quotes around, but the spirit of these words serves to indicate the two planes of perspective I'm talking about. And between them,

were the substantive pillars of humane knowledge and feeling ought to join them, is...not much. Or not much audible, in the way of personal, practical understanding.

Whether or not Officer Clayton broke the law, whether or not Officer Goodwin won some arbitration, police brutality is obviously, statistically, a national as well as a very local problem, and a chronic one. And no one who has been at Wesleyan very long should be surprised by that. While I have no doubt there are many, many decent individual police officers whose lives may justify the pillar the fraternal order of police tries to place all cops up on, I am equally certain that

the nature of law enforcement agencies guarantees the abuse of their power. When a person's legal fees, weaponry and morality are all sponsored *carte blanche* by the state, when they are accountable to virtually no one, this power is liable to corrupt them: just as the nature of our current political system inextricably weds politicians to big money interests, just as when you build more prisons you will

suddenly find yourself with more prisoners, just as when you sell military strongmen your surplus arms and train their goons through your instructors you will discover them installing themselves as dictators, and then (conveniently) making friendly deals with your international corporations, etc.

We at Wesleyan sit for the most part on the very tip of an iceberg of unequal power relations; that is to say, of systematic coercion. Officer Clayton's comments wet perhaps just the tips of our toes. The louder we cry out in surprise, the more naive we show ourselves to be. Of course an armed branch of the government was antagonized when a large group of students publicized its own dirty dealings and bullying; Mumia Abu Jamal expected to be framed. Institutionalized authority never welcomes questioning. So why bother tossing it the apologetic bone of, "We are not a group of uneducated lovers of cop-killers"?

Maybe you take a more moderate stance. Listening to people voice their opinions, an underlying, unexamined difference of vision regarding the police became apparent. Are the cops our friends? Why yes, assuredly, as long as we identify ourselves only with a privileged elite. But start talking about death row



prisoners, immigrant labor, teenagers, especially of color, the homeless: then our freedom of expression becomes offensive to many in positions of power. Yet not much was said in the Traverse Square parking lot about anyone other than students, despite the obvious connection to Mumia's case - because that might be 'too inflammatory'. So instead of using this "Clayton Incident" to educate "the community" - however it chooses to define itself - about continuing local violence, national hot-spots of brutality, Jamal's case, or the conservative prejudices activists have and will always encounter, what was demonstrated was that this campus likes to talk mostly about itself. I know that many marchers believe in more than was vocalized then. But this is the impression many residents were left with. Pleased with my iceberg analogy, I shared it with a couple of Traverse Square residents I was talking to. "Yeah," he told me, "now you go back to your lunch and your classes, you've never missed a meal in your life. And I'm sitting here drowning."

I don't understand how change is effected on a grass-roots level any more clearly than anyone else. But I am growing more and more uncertain of the value of marches, press conferences, and speak-outs. Listening to my friends, I can easily hear when they stop speaking their own words and begin to graft on jargon. I use we-speak too, and chalk "Equal enforcement of justice" without really knowing what that means, or how anyone could go about getting it done.

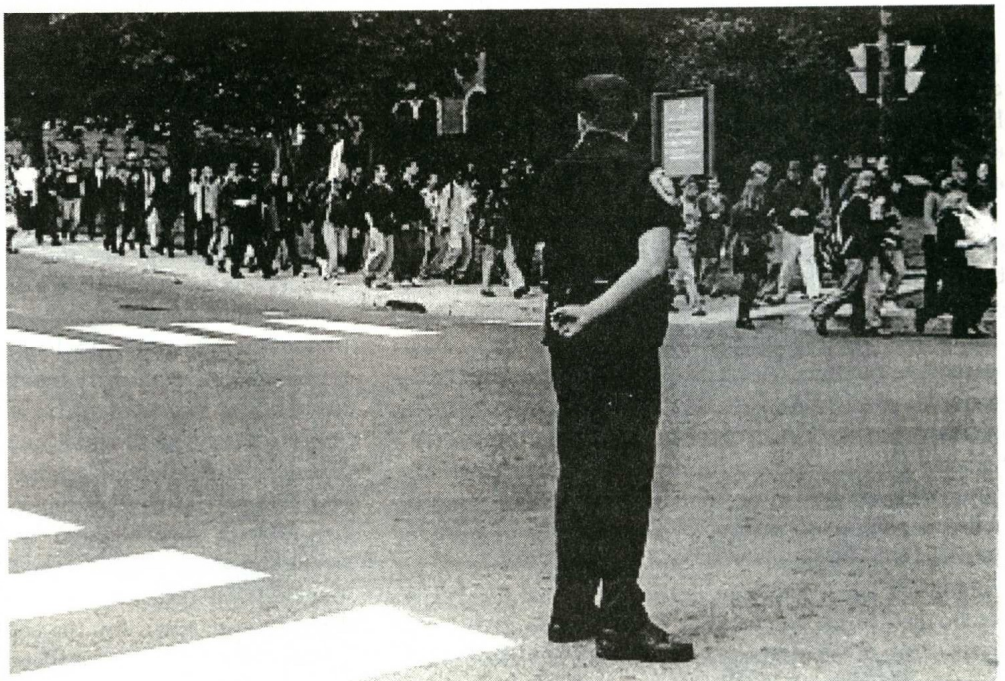
As activism leans more and more heavily on the media for support, concrete, "practical" actions give way to abstract, symbolic gestures. These can be valuable in developing broader networks of support, but without inner sincerity they become mere posturing. There is something glamorous about acting the part of an activist, as immortalized in documentaries about the sixties: it is a role highly validated by liberal youth culture. In a meeting prior to the march, a few people expressed that they wouldn't mind being arrested if trouble came up: "That's what we're

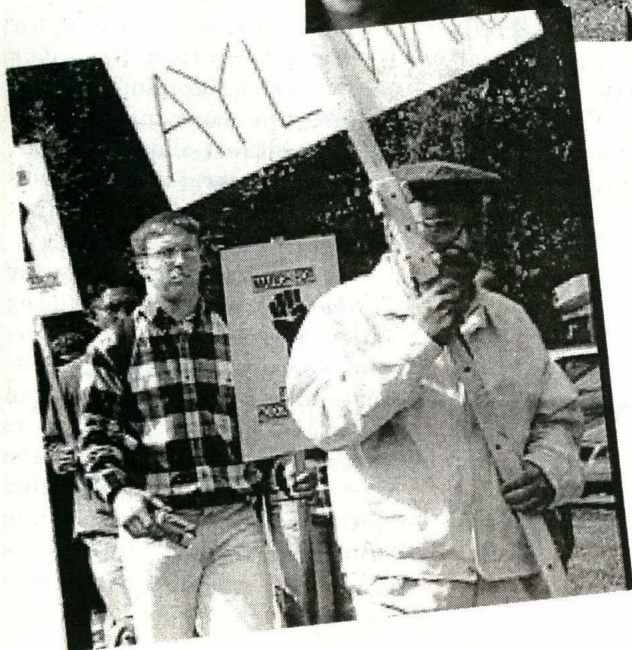
here for, isn't it?" I have to disagree: I don't think that's necessarily what we were there for, unless that really would have helped to oppose police harassment.

Maybe listening to a discussion of whether "we" want to use a giant eyeball, video camera or coffin to embody our discontent has simply made me cynical, not to mention how to please the press with maximum efficiency - the press, which originally tried to bully speakers on Saturday by threatening to leave. But maybe the forms of protest that were established by previous movements have rotted from the inside: maybe the formal ritual of a march has grown hollow, turned into an empty reflex reaction.

Vaclav Havel wrote, "Hope is not the conviction that something will turn out a certain way. Hope is the conviction that something makes sense, no matter what the outcome." This process of making sense, for me, has always meant the inward balancing of doubt and trust. I wrote this essay partly to exorcize that darker voice which can persuade anyone into apathetic paralysis. But it is a voice that can also lay a foundation for truly constructive revision of a movement or a belief. As one party to last Friday's conversation pointed out, we should not look at anything that reveals a greater body of truth on which to act as a setback. I don't understand how change is effected by individuals; that's part of what I'm here to find out. But I hope that in the process of defining the problem, or crisis, that I sense, that I have at least besieged it. ☼

As activism leans more and more heavily on the media for support, concrete, "practical" actions give way to abstract, symbolic gestures.





Photographs by Jennifer Mackenzie



by Aongus Burke

Coming Out

National Coming Out Day is more
than a simple step out of the closet

October 11th is National Coming Out Day. In light of this, I'd first off like to use this space to tell the Wesleyan community, but especially those to whom I have represented myself as otherwise, that I am gay.

Hermes probably isn't the most appropriate forum for me to make this sort of declaration. Invoking a personal voice, however, serves my purposes well for what is to come. I hope to use this article to give an account of how I have come to arrive at my current sense of what needs to happen culturally and politically in our society before anything resembling equality or liberation for queers could be said to have been achieved. By writing from an avowedly personal perspective, I wish to make clear that I do not represent the queer "community" as a whole. Indeed, since I have not been out to myself for very long, I usually view myself as someone still at the margins of both queer and straight identities. I suppose this might lend

vant to mainstream society. While I think there are problems with such a line of reasoning, I just hope people will listen to what I have to say for whatever reason.

Although I had toyed with the idea several times in the past, I only came to realize that I was gay towards the end

that they were sexual in nature.

Some people may find this hard to believe. In fact, looking back, so do I. I suppose the fact that, prior to Wesleyan, I had gone to Catholic school all my life is of some relevance here. But the importance of my Catholic

background would be easy to overemphasize. I did, after all, have sex education in both grammar school and high school. In any event, by the time I was in high school, I had largely rejected Catholicism anyway and by the time I was senior I was an agnostic. My political attitudes, including towards gays, had for a long time been quite liberal. Besides, I was not raised by the Catholic Church alone. The impact of the dominant mass-culture, the same mass-culture that raised just about all of us, was far greater. It is that culture, I believe, that must change.

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some authority to what I have to say to in the eyes of some heterosexuals—perhaps they will conclude that my politics, as yet not thoroughly reoriented by prolonged exposure to gay culture, will still be rele-

arousal. Over the years I had become pretty good at suppressing most of them. As for the strongest feelings...well, I merely thought they were bizarre—but, again, I rarely even considered the possibility

It wasn't long before my initial ecstasy about coming out to myself gave way to anxious concern. Suddenly I came to realize how difficult it can be to meet people when you're interested in members of the same sex. You can't just flirt with anyone you're attracted to when you're gay. Unless you know the sexuality of the person you are attracted to, coming on to him is, needless to



say, rather risky — whether that be the risk of alienating a colleague or getting beat up by a stranger and his friends. When you're straight, you simply don't have to worry about this sort of thing.

Therefore, it's very easy for me to understand why many gay people are so flamboyant about their sexuality — they don't want potential partners to have to wonder about their sexuality or to be too scared to ask. It's also easy for me to understand why so many gay men are obsessed with sex. Because it's so difficult to meet people, when you do, it's easy to forego the getting acquainted part of the relationship. And, when you're that desperate, it's also all too easy to forego being safe.

And I won't hesitate to blame mass-culture for that. I'm normally very reluctant to claim that my values should be everyone's values, to claim that I know what our culture should be. But not this time. Most people accept the basic principle that unless someone's actions are harming others against the latter's will, you let them be and you treat them equally. The gay marriage issue aside, I am optimistic that Americans are gradually extending this principle to the activities of gays and lesbians. But the issue doesn't stop at a political level with anti-discrimination laws and legalized gay marriages. Because until the day that gay teenagers interpret their desires for what they are as naturally and fearlessly as straight teenagers do, we won't be treating them equally. Until the day that anyone of any gender can flirt with anyone of any gender, until the day that gays and lesbians don't feel compelled to act according to stereotypes, until the day that gays and lesbians can have the same sorts

of choices as heterosexuals do about how they want their relationships to be, gays and lesbians will not be free. And


prehensive sex education programs. The larger cultural terrain is the real battleground, however. The victories here

Until the day that gay teenagers interpret their desires for what they are as naturally and fearlessly as straight teenagers do, we won't be treating them equally.

this is why the changes that need to be made must be more than political but cultural too.

Of course, the political and the cultural aren't wholly distinct spheres of the social world. Public schools, for example, are a key site of cultural transmission. Gays and lesbians will have to fight to change reading lists that normalize heterosexual family life at the exclusion of queer lifestyles and we must promote informative, candid, and com-

consist in being out, being visible, and being proud. Unfortunately, the cultural repercussions here may not be as great as those that come with a victory at the local school board and the risks are often much greater. But this makes no mention of the rewards of living out one's life true to oneself, unashamed of the things that matter most.

Those are rewards I'm ready to reap. 



OCTOBER 11



to face to face to face to face to face to face

Face to Face

to face to face to face

with The Man

to face

His Identity Revealed

by JAY FEINBERG

I've been kicked around in the system before. Haven't we all? I've come to accept that the world is full of injustice and people with an unquenchable thirst for power. In my high school years it really got me down. I remained down about the situation for years until I had a revelation. Granted, this revelation was common knowledge to many, but to me it was new. I realized that there is a power out there which controls all the lousy things which happen to righteous people. This force of evil is known universally as The Man. C'mon, you knew he was out there. He's screwed us all at one time or another.

Like many of my fellow students I have had reason to believe that The Man was actually in the vicinity of Middletown, possibly even working here at Wesleyan. Well fear him no longer, because I have found him, and he's not nearly as intimidating in person as you might think. You're probably wondering how I came across The Man; after all, he's known for his elusiveness. Well, here's how it all went down:

I'd been working in WEShop for about four weeks. From the moment I started I had an eerie feeling that there is something more to that place than meets the eye. At first I was just confused, but then the pieces of the puzzle started coming together. There were the outrageous prices and ridiculous amount of Nabisco products. Then the obsession of taking everybody's ID before ringing them up (I don't know if you've ever noticed, but they scan your card twice when you go there). The next thing that got me thinking was those cameras. Look around next time you're there; they're all over the place. And the final piece in this puzzle was Leonard, the cashier (you know who he is). All these hints fell together, like at the end of a *Scooby Doo* show. And that's when I realized that The Man was headquartered nearby. Exactly where, I did not know. One day it all came together.

I was going about my usual routine at work, filling in the milk and what-not when the time came for my break. Imagine the rush of excitement as I contemplated a full ten minutes of leisure. According to the policy

which was relayed to me, I was entitled to \$5.38 worth of free food on my break. At WEShop that equals one hummus sandwich made at MoCon, a can of soda, and a cheesy little ninety-nine cent bag of candy corn. There is only one catch: you can only take what you can eat. I figured that to mean no two liter bottles, frozen meats, etc., and I sat down and ate my paltry meal in the six minutes of break time that I had left. The sandwich and the soda went down quick but I didn't get to the candy corn so I placed it on top of my backpack for later consumption and went back to work.

This is where the whole story comes together. At the end of my shift Christine, the assistant manager with the eighties haircut, asked me if she could speak with me for a moment. She lead me through the tinted door at the rear of WEShop which bears a sign warning all others not to go back there. Then she took me through a labrynthian passageway which ends at yet another door. On the other side was an office, and someone in there wanted to speak to me. I stepped in and looked around. Then, I was overcome as everything came into place in one instant. It was like a dream from the night before that you can't remember until something makes it all rush back at once. First I looked at the far wall, and saw a video monitor. Then, on top of the desk, I saw stacks of money and a big safe over in the corner. This was the moment that I realized I was face to face with The Man. He knew I was on his trail, I think. What else

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First I looked at the far wall, and saw a video monitor. Then, on top of the desk, I saw stacks of money and a big safe over in the corner. This was the moment I realized I was face to face with The Man.

could explain what happened next?

He asked me, "Do you know what our policy is regarding employee meal times?"

"Yes," I said. "My purchase is not to exceed \$5.38."

"WRONG!" The Man bellowed at me. "You are permitted to take only that which you can eat during your break!"

To make a long story a little shorter, The Man proceeded to berate me for my ignorance and question my



to face The Man to face to face The Man to face The Man to face The Man

integrity. I told him it was a matter of misunderstanding and that I truly had intended to eat the candy corns as part of my meal, and that this task is far from unconscionable. It wasn't like I had stashed away a six-pack of Pepsi or a side of frozen beef. (NOTE: The Man loves beef.) The Man would not yield. Instead, he insulted me again, this time by questioning my intelligence. At this point I offered to return the unopened bag of candy corn which I had so slyly stashed on top of my backpack in plain sight of all. Once again, The Man would not yield. I must admit, though, I was not expecting to be terminated for my petty violation of WEShop law, which I had committed because a high-ranking co-employee had given me erroneous information regarding employee meal-time procedure. Ah, but such is the web of deceit The Man weaves. Indeed, there is no other Man who could possibly be so cold, calculating, and reclusive. I knew that there was no point in trying to do battle with The Man on his turf, so I left his lair with my head up high, knowing that The Man feared me, and saw it necessary to remove me because I was a threat to him.

The beauty of the whole situation is this: The Man knows I'm on to him. And though I may never be able to gain access to his headquarters again I can fight him in other ways. That is where I turn to you, the reader. Undoubtedly you shop at WEShop occasionally. Well, next time you're there, look for The Man. If you see him, let him know that you're on to him. Hey, you could just flip the finger at one of those cameras he's got set up to keep tabs on you, if that's your style. Feel free to inquire about his whereabouts. And please, refer to him as The Man. Perhaps if we can collectively apply enough pressure to him, he will flee from Middletown and his treacherous influence over Wesleyan will be removed. For it is he, not

Bennet, who runs the show here and keeps good folks like you and me down.

How will you know him when you see him? It's fairly obvious that he is The Man. He's middle-aged, stands about 5'10", has brown hair and, of course, brown eyes. Not surprisingly he has chosen to go by the uncommon title John. Oh yes, and he is slightly overweight. In other words, he's pretty much what you expected.

Finally, you may be wondering how Leonard ties into this story. What makes him a clue? Come on, think about it. Leonard's known this all along. He's the only one who knew, until now. Wouldn't you be in a pissy mood if you were the sole possessor of this knowledge and you were powerless to do anything about it? So next time you're in WEShop, after you do whatever it is you have to do there, while Leonard's ringing up your purchase, give him a wink. Let him know we're on his side now.



The Man



WHO WANTS WAR?

MANEUVERING FOR DEATH, OIL, AND ELECTORAL VICTORY

by
Sobi Hossain

Five years ago, Desert Storm left Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein humiliated and weakened, yet, unfortunately, still in power. The five-year-old battle of attrition against Hussein erupted once again this year on August 31st. Despite warnings issued by President Clinton, Hussein forcefully seized control of northern Iraq from the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan—the Kurdish faction being protected by the United States. On August 31st, Hussein sent 40,000 Iraqi troops to the Kurdish safe haven in northern Iraq. Within hours Hussein's troops reportedly rounded up and killed dozens of Iraqi defectors and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan was replaced by the Iraqi-supported Kurdish faction known as the Kurdistan Democratic Party. In addition, Hussein uncovered and killed members of the clandestine CIA operation that had been working covertly for almost five years to overthrow him and his regime. The CIA members escaped into Turkey hours before Saddam's troops arrived. Unfortunately, the 1,500 members of the Iraqi National Congress aiding the CIA were not so lucky.

One the covert operation had been uncovered, the CIA immediately abandoned their allies and left them to fend for themselves. Those who were not able to flee were tortured and then systematically executed by the Iraqi secret police known as the Mukhabaret. "the CIA has fled and abandoned a large number of people," says Rend Rahim Francke, director of the anti-Saddam Iraq Foundation in Washington. "All Iraqis—all those in the opposition—feel extremely let down by the US. The perception among Iraqis is that having anything to

do with the US is dangerous to your health."

In response to Hussein's latest human rights violations against the Kurds, President Clinton has launched several missile attacks against Iraq. The Clinton Administration, however, has been criticized for not launching a "proportional" attack against Iraq. President Clinton's political fate in the upcoming election is largely riding on his dealings with Iraq.

Thus far, the ongoing conflict with Iraq has been an unrelenting test of wills between Hussein and Clinton. Every act of defiance committed by Hussein, including firing at allied planes in the no-fly zone has been met with a retaliatory act by the United States—the firing of additional cruise missiles.

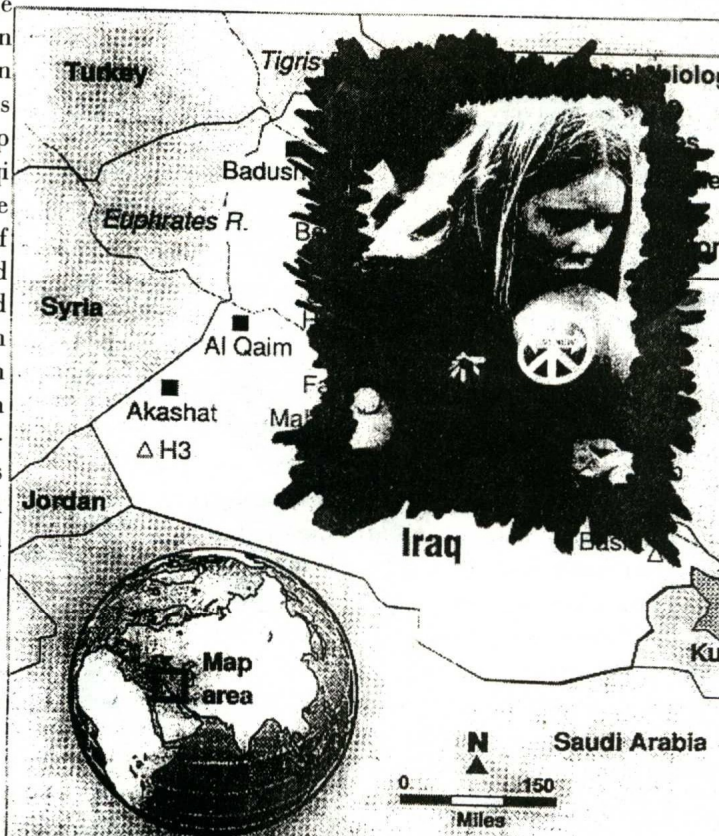
Since the Gulf War in 1991, the United States has pursued a policy of containment against Hussein and his regime. However, in light of recent events, the Clinton Administration is now preparing to launch a war of annihilation against Hussein and his regime. Currently, US troops, planes, tanks and weapons are accumulating in the Gulf.

Clinton, however, has explicitly stated that the United States will not launch an attack unless provoked by Iraq. Hussein has backed off away from his threats of war with the recent build-up of troops, but it is uncertain how long this will last.

Meanwhile, both President Clinton and Saddam Hussein are in extremely precarious positions. The event of the upcoming weeks will undoubtedly determine the political fates of both.

hermes

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HAVE WE SEEN THIS BEFORE???

Predetermined Democracy

The Dominican Republic's elections are neither free nor fair

Julie Dulude

In the aftermath of the Dominican Republic's presidential elections, the scant media attention devoted to the subject has fixed on how newly inaugurated president Leonel Fernández is going to end thirty years of strongman rule. But how is he going to escape the electoral pact he signed with seven-times president Joaquín Balaguer which enabled him to eke out his narrow victory? How is he going to "be his own man," as he claims he wants to be? Considering Balaguer's

It would be a hoax to maintain that an election whose decision could have been reversed by only three percentage points, and where the country's basic electoral system is methodically wired against the opposition, could be called free and fair

track record, and the fact that Fernández' Dominican Liberation Party (PLD) controls only one of thirty votes in the Senate and thirteen of 120 seats in the Lower House, the answer to this question is evident — not a single piece of legislation will pass without Balaguer's imprimatur. In short, Balaguer's far-reaching tentacles cannot be circumvented, even if this should turn out to be Fernández' intention.

Soon, Fernández will discover that his plans to reform the island's corrupt political institutions will be laughed out of Congress. Grief over Fernández' predicament, however, is entirely unwarranted. He knew that the ruling party was funding his campaign almost from its inception, because Balaguer's own party candidate bitterly and repeatedly complained of this. In accepting Balaguer's tainted financial support, Fernández signed a pact with the devil. But his victory is more important than in itself; it offers a good model of the Clinton Administration's attempts to pass off hollow democracies as the real thing. Deputy National Security Advisor Sandy Berger constantly preaches that Latin America contains thirty-four democracies and one dictatorship, Cuba. Nonsense! What it largely has is democratic form, not substance.

Did a "free and fair" election actually occur in the Dominican Republic? Even after dismissing attempts by Balaguer's security forces to forcibly remove and later buy ID voting cards (after their earlier efforts were internationally denounced) from known supporters of Francisco Peña Gómez, the major opposition candidate, the answer is no! The *Balagueristas* used

every dirty trick imaginable to rig the balloting, but their most formidable ploy was providing Fernández with almost unlimited access to media exposure, both in terms of news coverage and paid TV ads, which were funded by donors persuaded to support him by Balaguer's aids.

It would be a hoax to maintain that an election whose decision could have been reversed by only three percentage points, and where the country's basic electoral system is methodically wired against the opposition, could be called free and fair. The tally merely exemplifies the one-sided financial access of government-backed candidates to public funds. To ignore the implicit and explicit *pecadillos* that occurred during the pre-electoral period and base the decision of whether the election was free and fair solely on the fact that relatively few incidences of fraud were documented during the actual balloting, lends the event a credibility which is ill-deserved.

What the results of the Dominican elections demonstrate, is that the fledgling vocation of election monitoring is at an early stage of development, which if allowed to proceed unchecked, could actually reverse much of the progress in democracy-building that Latin America has achieved over the past decade. The naive assumption behind election monitoring is that the tradition of corruption, so deeply rooted in the Latin American political systems, can be transcended through the artificial insemination of democratic principles into regional electoral processes by little more than the presence of international observers. To a certain extent this may be true. Clearly, the presence of international observers in itself will tend to have a cautionary effect on those intending a massive steal of an election. In fact, the approach seems to have worked in

Deputy National Security Advisor Sandy Berger constantly preaches that Latin America contains thirty four democracies and one dictatorship, Cuba. Nonsense! What it largely has is democratic form and not substance.

the Carter Center's monitoring of Guyana's 1992 presidential elections. At other times, however, the simplifications behind the monitoring function have helped to legitimate elections that were free and fair only in a technical sense, such as the 1990 elections in



WORLD ISSUES

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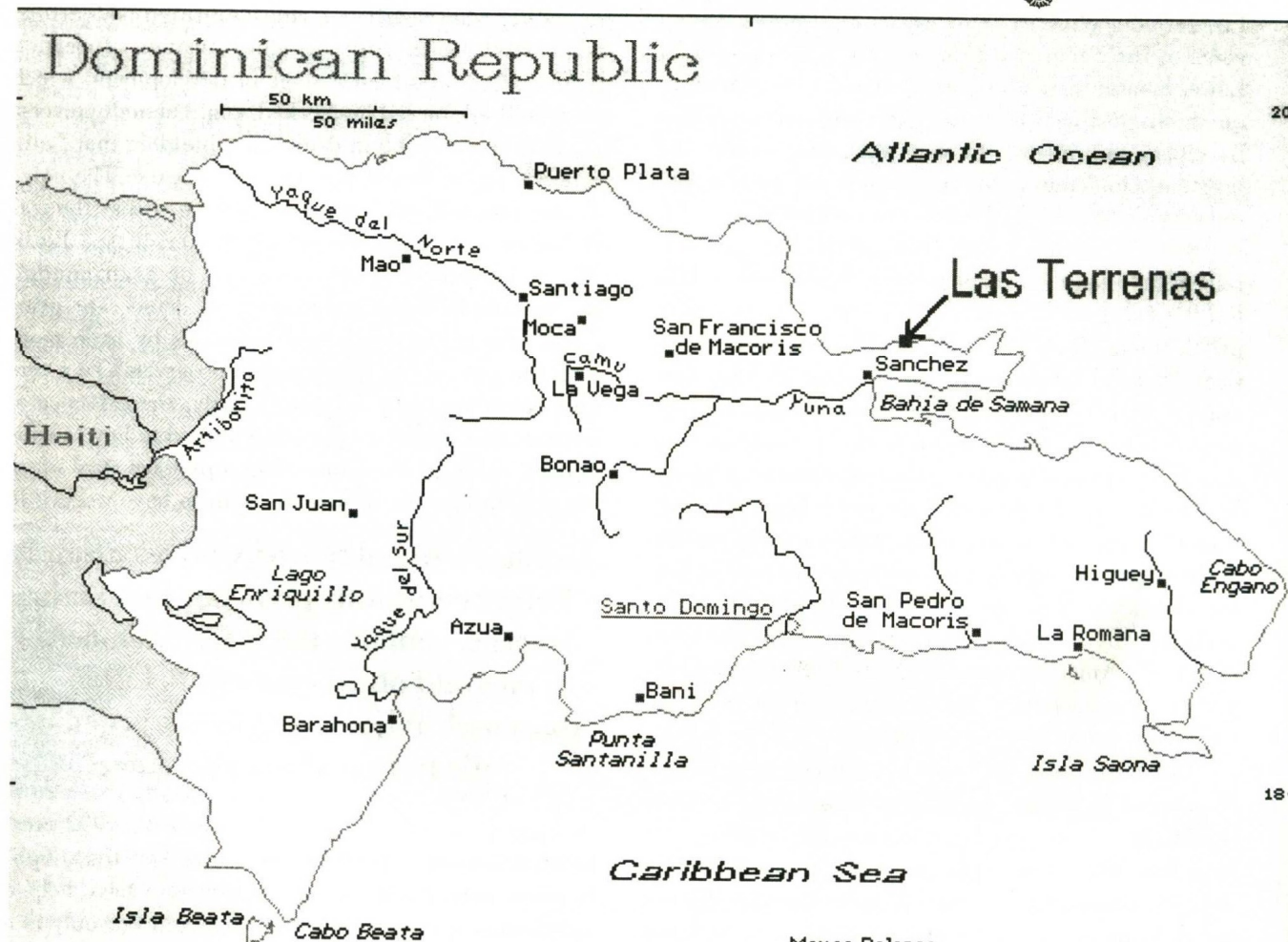
technical sense, such as the 1990 elections in Nicaragua. There, the National Endowment for Democracy supplied "non-partisan" observers, even while it poured almost ten million dollars into the country at the request of the Bush administration in order to ensure a Sandinista defeat.

The conventional definition of what constitutes a free and fair election is too narrowly defined to be a reliable index of democratic realities. Election monitoring is hardly a codified science with inexorable rules, but certain questions must be asked, such as: 'Who is funding the campaign?' 'Are government funds being used in a non-partisan manner?' 'How high is the level of intimidation surrounding the elections?' and 'Do the candidates have equal media access?' These are the issues that characteristically decide Third World elections. In the Dominican campaign, Fernández' victory was practically guaranteed by the fact that his picture dominated the TV screen as the result of a privileged relationship between the government and TV network owners, almost all of whom had received their licenses from Balaguer through illicit means. This allowed Balaguer to informally censor all the political programs that were being aired. Unfortunately, the Carter Center

and other election-monitoring organizations are almost entirely mute on such issues.

For international observers to serve a useful purpose in the promulgation of electoral democracy in Latin America, the situation demands more than a simple litmus test of balloting procedures. The modus operandi of monitoring must be broadened to include pre-electoral campaign practices, and be better tailored to suit each country's unique profile. Elections are not necessarily fair, even if they are free. Democracy cannot be exported through priggish lectures about fine-tuning reforms and the installation of temporary democratic fixtures. Certainly you don't fly in on the eve of an election and make a cameo appearance, as was Jimmy Carter's early style. You must not only establish an early presence in the country months before the scheduled ballot, but need to know what to look for, something the Carter Center might think about before it sends off its notables to monitor the Nicaraguan presidential elections in October.

Julie Dulude was a research associate at the Washington-based Council on Hemispheric Affairs (COHA) over the summer.



Moyce Polanco

70 <http://www.asd.k12.ak.us/moyce/moyce.html>

The Death of 2Pac

by David S. Vine

Marginalizing a Sign of the Times



Killing us one by one. In one way or another America will find a way to eliminate the problem one by one. The problem is the troublesome black youth of the ghetto, and one by one we are being wiped off the face of this earth at an extremely alarming rate. And even more alarming is the fact that we are not fighting back.

2Pac, "Words of Wisdom," *2Pacalypse Now*, (Interscope: 1991).

Suddenly I see, some niggas that I don't like [sounds of automatic weapon fire]. (Got em.)/ A smokin ass nigga robbed me blind/ I got him Tech 9, now his smokin ass is mine....I thought these niggas knew, I'm a crooked nigga too.

We should mourn what 2Pac's death reveals about ourselves and the country in which we live.

2 P a c ,
"Crooked Ass Nigga,"
2Pacalypse Now,
(Interscope: 1991).

Tupac Amaru Shakur is dead. The rapper known as 2Pac whose hit songs "Keep Ya Head Up" and "Dear Mama" speak of the need to respect women and mothers is dead. The "gangsta rapper" who boasted of killing "niggas" and racist cops to more than \$80 million in record sales is dead. The Bronx-born son of a Black Panther who studied acting and ballet at an elite, Baltimore high school is dead. The man tattooed with the words "Thug Life" and "Outlaw" who was recently released on bail from a 1994 sexual assault conviction is dead. Tupac Amaru Shakur is dead at the age of 25.

What are we to make of Tupac's death? What do we do with these contradictory images from his life? And what are we to make of the public reaction to his murder? Major newspapers and magazines have for the most part portrayed the artist's killing as the appropriate end to a life defined by violence. The September

23rd issue of *Time* is typical. Its article, "What

From the beginning of his solo career, 2Pac demonstrated a desire to escape the gangsta life he otherwise glorified

Goes 'Round....," explained, "Superstar rapper Tupac Shakur is gunned down in an ugly scene straight out of his own lyrics." By connecting Tupac's murder to the content of his music, most of the mainstream

media depicted his death as the almost

inevitable—perhaps fitting—demise of a gangsta rapper.

Should we likewise dismiss Tupac's death as the predictable, violent culmination of a carefully crafted gangsta life? Or perhaps we should be mourning Tupac and the loss of a great talent in the rap world? No matter what we decide, Tupac's murder transcends his own life and death. Ultimately, we should mourn what Tupac's death reveals about ourselves and the country in which we live.

* * *

Shortly after the September 7th, Mike Tyson-Bruce Seldon, heavyweight title fight, Tupac Shakur and the head of his Death Row record label, Marion (Suge) Knight, were stuck in Las Vegas traffic. Out of the neon-lit night, a white Cadillac pulled up alongside Knight's black BMW 750. Two unidentified assassins jumped out of the Cadillac spraying the BMW with gunfire. Four bullets hit Tupac, while Knight was only grazed in the assault. Six days later, the artist so revered by fans and so hated by politicians and activists died from his wounds.

In trying to make sense of Tupac's death, we become easily lost in a maze of increasingly confusing contradictions. Tupac—one of the leaders of West Coast rap—was born in 1971 in the Bronx. His Black Panther mother had only been released from jail a month earlier following her acquittal on bombing charges. Growing up fatherless, Tupac eventually attended the elite High School for the Performing Arts after his family moved to Baltimore. Following a friend's shooting in a gun accident, the high schooler wrote and performed his first rap about gun control. Tupac continued to pursue his new musical interest after the family moved to Marin City, California in 1988, while attending wealthy Tamalpais High School.

Living in a Marin public housing complex in a neighborhood known as the "jungle," Tupac began dealing drugs. According to one Marin City resident quoted in *The New York Times*, "He just started soaking up gang." At the same time, Tupac continued with his career in music and landed a job first as a roadie and later as a rapper with the group Digital Underground,



best known for its song, "The Humpty Dance."

The star's breakthrough came with his first solo album, 1991's *2Pacalypse Now*. On the record, Tupac demonstrated an already crafted gangsta persona in songs like "Crooked Ass Nigga": "I got a 9 millimeter Glock pistol/...so make your move/ and act like you wanna flip/ I fire 13 shots to pop another clip [sounds of gunshots]....The more I shot/ the more muthafuckas drop/ and even cops got shot when they rolled up." And yet, even on this first album, he began to express regrets about his chosen life. On the popular single "Trapped," Tupac explains, "Over the years I've done a lot of growin' up/ gettin' drunk, throwin' up...Then I said I had enough/ there must be another route/ a way out to money and fame/ I change my name, play a different game/ Tired of being trapped in this vicious cycle/ if one more cop harasses me I just might go psycho." From the beginning of his solo career, Tupac thus demonstrated a desire to escape the gangsta life he otherwise glorified.

At about the same time as *2Pacalypse Now*'s release, Tupac began a film career that would include the movies *Juice*, *Above the Rim*, John Singleton's *Poetic Justice*, and the just completed, *Gang Related*.

Political controversy, however, overshadowed Tupac's acting career, as his albums became the target of groups seeking to censor gangsta rap. Then-Vice President Dan Quayle attacked the album as part of his 1992 fight for "family values" after a Texas man accused of killing a state trooper blamed *2Pacalypse Now* for encouraging him to shoot the officer. Former drug czar William Bennett, Reverend Jesse Jackson, and others followed suit, denouncing Tupac and entertainment giant Time Warner for their investment in Tupac's distributor Interscope Records.

Despite (and perhaps because of) this negative publicity, Tupac's popularity grew with subsequent albums including, *Strictly 4 My N.I.G.G.A.Z.*, *Me Against the World*, and his most recent, 1995, platinum-selling album, *All Eyez on Me*. These recordings and Tupac's ever-increasing reputation for violence combined to propel him into the upper echelon of the rap world. A 1994 conviction on sexual abuse charges that he sodomized a 20-year-old gave Tupac a 1 1/2 to 4 1/2 year sentence. During the trial Tupac was robbed of \$40,000 in jewelry and nearly killed when he was shot five times in the entrance to a New York City recording studio. In the midst of this publicity, however, Tupac began to express doubts about his gangsta lifestyle. "I lived the thug life," he

confessed to *Vibe* magazine. "It was stupid."

Finding himself bankrupted by his legal fees and locked up in jail, Tupac soon reversed course. The rapper accepted the offer of Suge Knight to join Death Row Records in return for Knight paying Tupac's

In the midst of this publicity, 2Pac began to express doubts about his Gangsta Lifestyle. "I lived the thug life," he confessed to *Vibe* magazine. "It was stupid."

debts and posting \$1.4 million for his temporary release pending appeal. With the move to Death Row to join other

gangsta rap stars like Snoop Doggy Dogg and Dr. Dre, Tupac returned whole-heartedly to the thug life from which he had so recently tried to retreat. Upon his release from prison he recorded *All Eyez on Me*, rap's first double album, which includes the songs, "Tradin' War Stories" and "Thug Passion." With the success of the five million seller and his entrance into the Death Row group, Tupac became a centerpiece of the increasingly violent, East Coast-West Coast, rap industry feud between Death Row and New York's Bad Boy Entertainment.

Only days after an East-West squabble at the 1996 MTV Awards show, Tupac found himself part of the Death Row entourage surrounding Suge Knight at the Tyson-Seldon fight. After the bout, he and the Death Row crew severely beat another member of the audience. Minutes later, Tupac was sitting in the passenger seat of Knight's black BMW when the white Cadillac pulled up and put four bullets in his body. Less than a week later, Tupac was dead.

The contradictions of Tupac's life must be seen in no small part as the result of a series of choices the artist made to create himself in the gangsta image. Perhaps Tupac did actually "live" the gangsta life when he was selling drugs after his move to the West Coast. But, from placing the outline of a gun with "2Pac" emblazoned on its side inside his first CD to beating a man at the Tyson fight shortly before his death, Tupac carefully crafted an image of violence and death. He was, after all, trained as an actor. Coming up through the ranks of rap, he grew to play a defined role in the music business. Ultimately, however, he may have played the role too well; every time he expressed any doubts about the gangsta life, he got sucked in even deeper.

That Tupac was unable to separate his roles as person and performer points to the weighty expectation in rap culture that an artist "keep it real" and live the life about which one sings. Whether or not Tupac ever really lived the life of a gangsta before his music career blossomed is essentially moot; once he embarked on that career, the way to sell



records was to show he lived the life. Tupac's arrests, his frequent fights, and his bulletproof vest-wearing, gun-toting style did just that. In the rap world, Tupac defined "keepin it real."

Former member of the rap group Public Enemy, Chuck D illustrates the market forces behind the gangsta posturing: "Take the high road, and your record never sees the light of day. Take the low road, and you sell a million copies." Gangsta rap has capitalized on its violent image to make millions for some of its stars, for their producers, and for their distribution companies. Despite the attention drawn to the music by those wanting to censor its violent and misogynistic lyrics, rap's violence—whether real or imagined—usually sells more records (Tupac's death pushed *All Eyez on Me* from 65th to 18th on the charts).

Many of those wanting to censor gangsta rap hold it responsible for the endemic violence among many young, urban, African American males. Whether or not one believes that the music is in any way responsible for that violence, one must admit that gangsta rap is representative of that violence. "They cuttin off welfare...crime is risin," Tupac rapped with a slowed, baritone voice on 1991's "Soulja's Story." "You got whites killin blacks/ cops killin blacks/ and blacks killin blacks/ shit just goin get worse." The violence described in the music and the actual violence in the rap industry is symptomatic of the carnage that in 1992 left 115 out of every 100,000 African American males aged 12 to 24 murdered—almost 10 times the murder rate for whites males of the same age. Gangsta rap is not just posturing for the sake of selling records. The music does represent the reality of drugs, drive-bys, and death for far too many inner city residents.

That reality is what has been largely forgotten in the analysis of Tupac's murder. The mainstream media has overwhelmingly focused on the violence in Tupac's music and in his own life, on his contradictions, and on the feuding in the rap business. The ongoing violence in inner city communities—represented by Tupac and other rappers—has been almost completely ignored.

The mainstream media's treatment of the death of another popular musician is illustrative of what reporters ignored after Tupac's murder. This summer, newspapers, magazines, and the networks jumped all

over the heroin overdose of Smashing Pumpkins' keyboardist, Jonathan Melvoin. Melvoin's death helped return the issue of heroin and drug use to the public's attention. Cover stories trumpeted the resurgent popularity of heroin among teenagers and twentysomethings. Furthered by revelations of widespread rock star abuse, heroin became the nation's hot topic, even translating into a campaign issue, as Bob Dole blasted President Clinton for being "soft on drugs."

Drugs may be "hot," but how much have we heard about inner city violence lately? The topic has almost totally disappeared from mainstream debate, and Tupac's death did nothing to highlight the violence in the way

He may have played the role too well; every time he expressed any doubts about the gangsta life, he got sucked in even deeper.

that Melvoin's death did for heroin. In reporting on the rapper's murder, some have even treated inner city decay like a phenomenon from a bygone era. On the front page of *The New York Times*, Michael Marriott detailed how Tupac rose to stardom in the late '80s, "at a time when inner cities were gripped by racial upheaval, gang violence, drug abuse and joblessness." Marriott's use of the past tense—as if we had left these problems behind—shows the extent of our cultural amnesia. Reports on daily gang and drug-related murders are now simply an expected part of nightly newscasts—no different from the weather—tut-tutted over briefly and then forgotten.

Rather than looking for deeper significance behind Tupac's death—as with Melvoin's—the media has focused on the violence surrounding Tupac the entertainer. *Washington Post* columnist

Courtland Milloy was a rare voice arguing that, "Shakur's death was a reminder...of how times have changed since black people were in a civil rights struggle against the system. Now we are at one another's throats, and the role of gangsta rap in all of this is a matter of considerable debate." His murder and our reaction to it shows us the extent to which we have forgotten about the violence that still grips inner city communities. The white, the wealthy, and the suburban have turned their backs on the problem. Now all we can see is the fitting death of a violent gangsta rapper. Tupac Shakur is not the problem; he is a symptom of larger problems that we as a nation have chosen to ignore.



"Take the high road, and your record never sees the light of day. Take the low road, and you sell a million copies."

EXPLORING HAIGHT-ASHBURY

Entering the Rave New World

by Daniel Dylan Young

Despite having lived only a four-hour drive away since early childhood, I had somehow managed to avoid visiting Haight-Ashbury up until a few weeks ago. On the day before I returned to Connecticut to begin my sophomore year here at Wesleyan, I made a slight detour along the road and took my first visit to this notorious area of San Francisco. Unfortunately, the experience I had there made me almost wish I had stayed away permanently.

Why did I hold such high hopes for Haight-Ashbury? I certainly can't say that the stories I'd heard about its present condition from other friends who visited would lead me to presume it was still a place of free love, hippie brotherhood and political activity. Times change, I know, and we have two decades of greed and egocentricism (the 70's and 80's) between now and then...not that I'm one of those starry-eyed idealists who wishes that we could go back to those "good old days." The 60's were as bad a time as any other, but back then some part of the popular culture at least pretended to be centering itself around political, mental and spiritual freedom and experimentation, rather than simply consumption and consumerism.

And it's not as if my still-hanging-on hippie parents raised me in a closet somewhere in the great northwest, feeding me only hemp, organic wheat germ and a dream of these cultural/political utopias out there in the big cities. I can't say that I have traveled extensively, but I've explored Berkeley and Telegraph Avenue, spent days wandering in Greenwich Village and walked a good length of Philadelphia's South Street, which my father (who spent the late 60's and early 70's in Philly) assures me is the place where all the hippies used to meet (apparently there's a very poppy song of the era that refers to it in those words but I can't identify it...and probably wouldn't want to).

In my visits to all these places I saw some sad and frightening things, but some good things as well. I can't say that I had high expectations of South Street (alright, I'd never heard of it until I went there, but how many non-Philly residents can say different?) so I couldn't really be let down by the place...it was all overpriced stores: cheesy chains, astronomically over-

priced "counter-culture" boutiques, and maybe 3 or 4 vendors (such as Veem or Zipperhead) with interesting/unique merchandise but prices that bilked you just as well as that of any other capitalist on the block. As for the human energy of the place, in my several visits I saw it boring and crawling with trendies but also was treated, on one sunny Friday afternoon/early evening in late April, to a freak show of great variety (for non-NYC East Coast) with swarms of young and old people of all strange descriptions wandering the avenues beside decaying but once beautiful old buildings.

It was there that I ran into the first, and only, person I have ever seen who had their upper canines capped in order to give them gigantically conspicuous vampire teeth—at least that's what I'm assuming they were, as I know that some cosmetic dentists have been called upon for such operations.

As for Greenwich Village, I found it to be just what it was talked up to me as — a place where just about everything imaginable was going on. And in a contemporary America everything imaginable has to include a great deal of commercialism or consumerism...and even if some of it was unpalatable to me, the nature of the place insists that it be there along with everything else. But still it is a place of total energy, just like the rest of New York but with the energies taking much more varied and/or twisted paths to fruition. And I certainly never expected to find pure communism/activism/free love in the midst of NYC...I didn't expect to find pure anything....

And Berkeley and Telegraph Avenue....ah well, Telegraph has the Gap and, far worse, countless incredibly high priced counter-culture boutiques selling you sleek, mass-produced clothing and paraphernalia that is supposed to somehow distinguish you as an individual. But Telegraph also has stores that sell incredibly unique T-shirts for three dollars, humongous record stores with any kind of music you could possibly want — cheap —, and, far far more importantly, it has UC Berkeley, a highly ranked educational institution where 30,000 young people are reading, discussing and thinking about just about any idea you can imagine. Something good, something wonderful, just about has to come of that, and you can feel the energy when you're there.





So back to my voyage to Haight Ashbury...I went into the trip with a thousand confused hopes, fears, and expectations. My past experiences in Berkeley, Philadelphia and New York led me to expect that I would see both the best and the worst, but in my dreams I would have found militant political and cultural activity...(wow, sounds kind of similar to the feelings I had about Wesleyan before my first year here...but I think Wesleyan wasn't quite so disappointing...hmm...). I mean, this is where the hippies began, where they supposedly got their from when SF Chronicle columnist Herb Caen christened these long-haired, outspoken youth as members of the "Haight-Ashbury Improvement Project."

So what did I see in the Haight, I'm sure you're asking by now...well, folks, it was NOT a pretty sight. Unfortunately I was bounded by the time constraints of my uptight parental units (you'd think they'd want to reminisce for days or something...but that's right, we moved out to northwest-nowhere because they don't like the city) to only spend 2 very concentrated hours exploring the area...if memory serves me correctly they were the hours from 3 to 5 PM in the afternoon, these hours being on Sunday, September 1st, the Sunday on Labor Day weekend. During these 2 hours of solid exploration I saw a big Gap store standing in the middle of the interesting part of Haight Street, which was quite a match for the big MacDonald's standing at one end of it. I also saw the creeping "counter-culture" boutiques, popping up where ever you turned...and, frighteningly enough, in the whole area I wandered I only found 2 stores that seemed of very great interest or value: **The Anarchist Bookstore**, which just about had it all and **Anubis Warpup** (I apologize to everyone if this is misspelled) a store with one very long wall entirely covered with 'zines from everywhere expounding every lifestyle or idea — it made me feel good to be in country with freedom of speech and press and expression just looking at that.

But the most horrible thing was the people who I had to stand alongside in order to look at this wonder (though thankfully none of them seemed to wander into the **Anarchist Bookstore**...but **Anubis Warpup** also sold plastic clothing, so of course they had to check that out). Mobs, crowds, swarms of kids who looked as though they had come out of a mold, or more realistically, 3 or 4 alternate molds of young people with short hair dyed an artificial, glitzy color, in tight, shiny T-shirts or button-up shirts with "70's retro" patterns, and always (boy or girl) with the same jeans that kind of hang off you, and the same shiny, dark sunglasses. They were EVERYWHERE, these hip, probably fairly rich (I don't know how the

hell else they could afford that clothing) young adults who always looked ready to go to a rave. And I got this feeling that these people who all looked exactly the same, probably all thought EXACTLY the same as well. But the most frightening thing was when I realized that as the ultra-hip set of a west

coast big city these kids are the ones forming a great many of the popular culture and popular counter-cul-

Why do we have to take from the counter-culture of our parents only the elements which are the most puerile and ultimately least fulfilling?

ture movements that we are seeing today. And they will also be forming a great many of those in the future of this brave new world..

And by the looks of them, we're not going to have a brave new word based on individual experimentation with new and old forms of thought and expression (or even of much thought and expression at all), nor a world of high political awareness and activism. It may certainly be, just like the hippie popular/pop-counter-culture was, a brave new world full of experimentation in new and old lifestyles; these people **are** playing with pleasure through sexual experimentation and drug use. Certainly not to totally put these experiences down, but isn't there more to human experimentation, and to the human experience, than sex and drugs? And isn't there more to us, this new generation emerging, than obsession with sex and drugs? The hippies and their contemporaries experimented with religion and political ideas and activism while they were also experimenting with sex and drugs...why do we have to take from the counter-culture of our parents only the elements which are the most puerile and (in my opinion) ultimately least fulfilling? I think that it's time for a wake up call —

But it seems that I am digressing from the main thrust of this article...or perhaps I am only beginning to discover the main thrust of this article. Nonetheless, to sum things up, I went to Haight Street with far too many expectations (and in far from the best state of mind for dealing with rampant consumerism and rave-bunnies) and went away with some very bad vibes but also with an increased passion to effect some change in the minds of these peers of mine and in the machine of capitalist consumption. **THEY** (you **KNOW** who I'm talking about) may have taken Haight Street, but that was only because too many people tuned in, turned on and sold out. Death or glory, my comrades, death or glory.





A NON-SCENE SCENE

CONNECTICUT'S BEDROOM POP BANDS

by Thad Domina

I once told my dean that I thought central Connecticut was a pretty hip place. She gave me a wary look and suggested that I take advantage of my ten free mental health sessions at the health center. Maybe she was right.

Then again, she has probably never heard of Jim Rao. Not many people at Wesleyan have. In fact, not many people in the state of Connecticut have.

But Jim Rao is one of central Connecticut's international pop stars. Sure, he doesn't have a major label contract or a video on MTV's *Alternative Nation*. In fact, his music doesn't even pay the rent on his place in Bristol.

Rao has no public persona. He rarely speaks with the media and he never plays live. He seldom even leaves his own bedroom. But Rao has recorded on a handful of American labels including Sunday Records and Cher Doll records as well as Spain's Elefant Records. And, his latest recording project, Orange Cake Mix's *More Mellow Hits* CD

is distributed throughout the United States, Europe and Japan.

Although Rao admits he doesn't "have a clue about what's going on in Connecticut music" and claims to "know more about pop bands in Holland than the bands in the area," he's a central component to one of the nation's most vibrant bedroom pop scenes. Rao's Orange Cake Mix shares an ethos with several central Connecticut bands that he may have never heard, including Manchester's Musical Chairs, Southington's The Differents, and a handful of bands who record on Middletown's Elephi Pelephi records.

It's a stretch to call a musical landscape as scattered as central Connecticut's a scene. Lou, a student at Central Connecticut State University, and the artist behind Elephi Pelephi's Farewood LP argues, "there's not that much of an indie community in the area. I mean, when I get a show, I'll call someone else up and ask them to play too, but mostly, things are pretty spread out."

Musical Chairs' Ian Schlein agrees. "Connecticut doesn't have an intense scene.... Bands here tend to develop their sound in their own little world." But then, he argues "maybe that's what the Connecticut sound is all about."

Grudgingly, Rao concurs, "New England is all about isolation. There's really nowhere to walk down the street, get a cup of coffee and chat here.... So there's really nothing better to do for a lot of us than make these songs."

In fact, the bands that make up Connecticut's indie pop community have more in common than simple isolation. They've all enjoyed success in Europe that outpaces their local recognition — Musical Chairs released their first seven inch record on England's Pillarbox Red Records and radio stations in England, France and Austria have given Elephi Pelephi's local recordings airtime. Furthermore, they all share a sound that bridges the gap between WeShop's radio pop and the low fidelity recordings that

The strength of the Connecticut bedroom pop scene lies in its recordings. Many of these records are internationally distributed and enjoyed, despite their relative obscurity and lack of availability in Connecticut. However, Brass City Records and Phoenix Records in Waterbury are two good bets for independent record shopping. And if stores fail you, contact the labels for mail order catalogs. Most independent labels provide quick, personal service and discounted prices.

Orange Cake Mix, *More Mellow Hits*, Elefant Records (Spain), 1995, \$10.

This new CD by Jim Rao sounds like a tour through your local Salvation Army's reject records bin. Several of the tracks combine the innocence of early 1960s hucklebop with the richness of psychedelic noise. Others, like "Girl in the Film," resurrect lounge guitar to create a sound that is reminiscent of some of the best of the 1970s plush carpet and frilly tuxedo lounge revival. Jim describes the sound as "a sort of subliminal bossa nova." For a more straight-ahead faux-British pop sound, look for Jim's previous band, Watercolor Sunset, on Sunday and Cher Doll records.

put Sebadoh and the rest of Northampton's indie rock community on the map.

Their music is about what Rao calls a "simplistic, catchy, innocent feeling, like a glimpse at a song I heard on the radio when I was young" combined with a musical savvy that prizes experimentation with new instruments, musical formats and sounds to put more mature emotions into this relatively naive format.

Connecticut's bedroom pop bands establish their sounds huddling around a four track recorder in their rooms, basements and garages. The four track offers these artists the chance to record without having to pay for expensive studio time, and the freedom to explore sounds on their own. Lou from Farewood explains, "I like to play with the four track.... with it, I can just fool around with my sound."

After recording, many bands simply sit on their tapes without ever seriously considering the possibility of releasing them. According to Schlein, Musical Chairs' first recording, the Bottled Up EP, was never intended for release. "Pillarbox Red somehow got ahold of a demo we did and contacted us. I've never had to send things out."

For Farewood, the process was similar. "I just gave John [from Elephi Pelephi Records] a copy of the tape without really thinking of putting it out. But he liked it... so we decided to put out the LP."

Others just establish a label to distribute their own music. Elephi Pelephi began when John, the label's founder, moved to Middletown, recorded two songs with happy giant, and established the label to give the band exposure. John says "I decided that if I'm going to live here, there has to be something going on, so I set up Elephi Pelephi."

The problem for Connecticut's bedroom pop stars arises after their record is

released. It is difficult to promote a record without playing live, and according to Lou from Farewood, "playing live is hard. A lot of my songs are pretty personal and I feel strange singing them in front of people I don't know."

Musical Chairs' Ian agrees, although he has become accustomed to playing live shows, primarily in New York City. "Our music is about emotion.... How much more gutsy can you be than standing up with an acoustic guitar and throwing your guts all over the stage?"


Still, even when bedroom pop bands overcome their stage fright and want to play live, it is impossible to find a venue in the area. Ian explains, "there is no pop club in Connecticut. In fact, there's not really even a place where pop music is welcome."

Sadly, Wesleyan and the other college campuses in the region have done little to help remedy this problem. Elephi Pelephi's headquarters are within walking distance of North College, but only on one occasion

has one of its bands been invited to play on the Wesleyan campus. Furthermore, Wesleyan students rarely turn up at Elephi Pelephi shows, even when they take place in downtown Middletown.

Because of this tepid response, combined with the draw of New York and Boston (powerful enough to claim Bridgeport's own Sonic Youth) Connecticut's indigenous indie pop scene molders in anonymity. Lou from Farewood complains "John will set up a show every couple of months, but people will just forget about all of us between shows."

So, Connecticut's bedroom pop bands are forced to just stay in their bedrooms, or schlep off to New York or Boston to play the shows that pay the bills. In either case, their sound remains foreign to the ears of most Wesleyan students and they continue to work in seclusion.

That's why many people might think you a little loony for loving Middletown. Its also why they are all wrong. 

The Differents, *Go Between* 7-inch, Shimmy Disc Records (New York), 1993, \$3.

The Differents are a boring band. They sound like Bush minus the distortion, a soulless Neil Diamond repackaged for the indie rock world. Don't waste your money on them, even if they are local.

Farewood, *Elephi Pelephi Records* (Middletown), 1995, \$8.

Lou Farewood may be a genius. I'm not crazy about lo-fi music, but his self-titled LP takes everything that the genre has going for it the sonic landscapes, the experimental spirit, and the emotion and gives it a breath of pop. Listen to this album before you go to bed and I guarantee that you will have a night full of sweetly postmodern dreams.

happy giant, *All the World is in Your Backyard* 7-inch, Elephi Pelephi Records (Middletown), 1993 \$3.

Middletown's Elephi Pelephi records started with this 7-inch, featuring John, the label's founder, on bass. Its sound is classic Elephi Pelephi, with muffled female vocals and rock/pop guitar riffs creating a cozy feeling. This record may not make you dance, but it will make you feel at home.



Fighting the System

Enough talk. It's time to change the weather.

by Owen Pollock

A lot of times people act like they can't change the weather. Like it's some big, omnipresent force that they have no control over. They let it dictate their lives. "Well, I'm really excited the picnic tomorrow, I just hope it doesn't *rain*." "I would like to spend a day outside tomorrow, but if it's *snowy and below freezing*..." I always hear about "alternate sites in case of rain." A lot of people even think the reason for the low turnout at convocation was because of the weather. We have come to believe that we are at the mercy of a whimsical force, one that has enormous influence over our lives. We have accepted that there is nothing we can do about it. I think this is wrong. And it's about time that we here at Wesleyan did something about it.

When I came to Wesleyan, I had heard that this was a "politically active" school. The people here really believed they could change things; even if that included the weather. I've heard stories about how things used to be. They used to have political rallies, marches, and sit-ins. They used to protest about issues that affected everyone. Their protests brought about clear and significant change for the greater good. I bet they never had bad weather.

Wesleyan has lost its voice. We act as though we don't even know who to complain to. Did Martin Luther have a distinct authority figure in mind when he published his Ninety-Five Theses? We act as though since the beginning of time man has simply accepted his fate of bad weather. Would communism have fallen if the people had felt this way? We need to mobilize, and we need to do it now.

This article isn't about coping with the weather. It isn't about making do with little discomfort, a little wetness, or a little cold. This article is about mak-

ing a change and about having an impact. This article is about changing the weather. I am so tired of hearing people complain that they're not happy with the weather. If you're not working to make it better, then you can't complain. Then we have the experts. They stand in front of the camera and lead us to believe that they "know" what the weather is going to be like. If they know what it's going to be like, why can't they change it? They have their maps, their pointers, and their moving storm clouds. Oh, it sounds very scientific

when they say it, but hurricanes, tornadoes, and monsoons kill people. I ask you, Mr. Weather Man, are you so arrogant as to play god with these people's lives?

Why does the weather have to vary according to location? Wouldn't it just be more efficient if the weather were just the same everywhere? And I don't just mean from continent to continent, or even from geographical location to geographical location. Why does it stop raining when you walk inside your house? Must it be in the low twenties when you walk outside when your body has a natural inclination towards room temperature? What about people with Seasonal Affective Disorder? If Wesleyan is so big on not discriminating against people, I think it's about time we made some changes.

These are the kinds of questions that we must begin to come to terms with if we are to prevail. Prevail we must. Think of the alternatives. Otherwise, we might be caught in a world in which we have no control over our own lives. We might not even know what tomorrow's weather will be like. For too long, we have let the weather beat us down, keep us inside, run our lives. I say it's time to take back our destiny. Let's stop letting the weather control our lives and start controlling it. Because you know, if you take the letters WEATHER and re-arrange them, dropping out the 'R,' you can spell WE HATE. But if you drop the 'W,' and the second 'E,' you can also spell HEART, and if you lead with your heart, the rest is sure to follow.

FIGHT! C.S.A.N.



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HERMES October, 1996

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